



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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HOW'S WILDLIFE DOING? "IN CELEBRATION OF AMERICA'S WILDLIFE" SHOWS YOU THE PROOF!

Picture what much of America looked like following the turn of the century: a barren landscape of flood-scarred stream valleys and eroded farmlands whose topsoil hung suspended in dusty clouds or lay at the muddy deltas of the continent's great rivers. Hills denuded of once-vast forests. The few game animals that had survived this destruction of habitat and years of relentless commercial hunting lingered as pitiful reminders of a land's once-bountiful wildlife legacy.

Decades later, the scene brightened: farm acreage was reclaimed and erosion curbed. The land was coaxed back to vitality, producing bumper crops in quantities that were the envy of the world; forests were restored with wise management and stewardship; and, with care and a half-century of effort, wildlife species rebounded with amazing quickness--testimony to the positive effects that wildlife management could produce in remarkably short order.

That's the message of "In Celebration of America's Wildlife," a new documentary film by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The film is being released this month in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, better known as the "Pittman-Robertson" program after the two legislators who sponsored the law.

"In Celebration of America's Wildlife," through the wildlife photography of cinematographer Stefan Dobert and the narration of outdoorsman John Flynn, vividly depicts the comeback of some of the Nation's most prized wildlife species: three million wild turkeys in the U.S. today, a 10-fold increase in 50 years; white-tailed deer holding strong at 15 million, up from a third of a million in 1900; pronghorn antelope at their greatest abundance since 1870.

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"Today, many of our wildlife species are more abundant and in better shape than at any time during the past 100 years," says Flynn. "As we look to the future, perhaps the most encouraging and enduring contribution of 'Pittman-Robertson' may well be that the science and practice of wildlife management is now well-established across America."

Who's responsible for this wildlife rebound? Those who restored the soil, the waters, and the forests all share the credit. But also responsible have been hunters and marksmen who for 50 years have supported special taxes on their sports equipment that have channeled some \$2 billion into wildlife management, research, and land acquisition since 1937. With these excise taxes, outdoorsmen and women continue to pay the way for wildlife restoration in America to the tune of more than \$100 million every year.

"In Celebration of America's Wildlife" was produced with the assistance of State fish and wildlife agencies in all 50 States and the several Commonwealths and Territories. To capture the essence of wildlife management in action as it's practiced in the U.S. today, many of these State wildlife professionals were filmed working on some of the most innovative and exciting restoration projects being attempted anywhere in the world, yielding action-packed scenes that even the most dedicated outdoorsman could scarcely hope to witness in a lifetime.

And what a wildlife story there is to tell! In this film, you'll tramp the woods of central Maine with State biologists tracking black bears and walk the Texas range with ranchers who've learned that cattle and pronghorn antelope mix quite well. Viewers will track mountain lions from the air over Colorado and plot the movements of caribou in Alaska with the latest satellite technology. You'll join a young New York woman on the skeet range to see how "Pittman-Robertson" also means safer hunting and training in ethical conduct for over 700,000 graduates of hunter education courses every year.

"In Celebration of America's Wildlife," in its 57-minute length, is available as a 16mm film, or in 1/2-inch VHS or Beta and 3/4-inch video cassette formats. Information on the sale, rental, and preview loan availability of "In Celebration of America's Wildlife" is available from all State fish and wildlife agency headquarters or any of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's regional offices indicated on the attached promotional announcement.

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Note to producers of outdoor television shows: A 6-minute video cassette in professional 3/4-inch format, showing capsule scenes from "In Celebration of America's Wildlife," is available on loan from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Audio-Visual Office, Room 8070 Main Interior Building, Washington, DC 20240 (202/343-8770). Coupled with the new 50th anniversary "Pittman-Robertson" book, Restoring America's Wildlife, which contains a summary of "Pittman-Robertson's" accomplishments in every State, this highlights tape can serve as an effective package that's easily adaptable to your show's format.